

WHETHER I wolde pleten with thee a fewethinges, usinge the wordes of fortune; tak hede now thyself, yif that she axeth right: O thou man, wherfore makest thou me gilty by thyne everydayes pleyninges? What wrong have I don thee? What goodes have I bireft thee that weren thyne? Stryf or plete with me, biforn what juge that thou wolt, of the possessioun of riches or of dignitees. And yif thou mayst shewen me that ever any mortal man hath received any of the thinges to ben hise in propre, than wol I graunte frely that alle thilke thinges weren thyne whiche that thou axest. When that nature broughte thee forth out of thy moder wombe, I receyved thee naked and nedy of alle thinges, and I norisshe thee with my riches, and was redy and ententif through my favour to susteyne thee; and that maketh thee now impacient ayens me; and I envyrounde thee with alle the abundance and shyninge of alle goodes that ben in my right. Now it lyketh me to withdrawn my hand; thou hast had grace as he that hath used of foreine goodes: thou hast no right to pleyne thee, as though thou haddest outrely forlorn alle thy thinges. Why pleyneest thou thanne? I have done thee no wrong. Richesses, honours, and swiche other thinges ben of my right. My servautes knowen me for hir lady; they comen with me, & departen when I wende. I dar wel affermen hardily, that yif the thinges of which thou pleyneest that thou hast forlorn, hadde ben thyne, thou ne hadde not lorn hem. Shal I thanne only ben defended to usen my right?

WHETHER, it is leveful to the hevене to make clere dayes, & after that, to coveren the same dayes with derke nightes. The yeer hath eek leve to apparailen the visage of the erthe, now with floures and now with fruit, & to confounden hem somtyme with reynes and with coldes. The see hath eek his right to ben somtyme calme & blaundishing with smothe water, and somtyme to ben horrible with waves and with tempestes. But the covetise of men, that may nat ben stanchied, shal it binde me to ben stedefast, sin that stedefastnesse is uncouth to my maneres? Swich is my strengthe, & this pley I pleye continually. I torne the whirling wheel with the turninge cerle; I am glad to chaungen the lowest to the heyest, and the

heyest to the lowest. Worth up, if thou wolt, so it be by this lawe, that thou ne holdenat that I do thee wronge though thou descende adoun, when the resoun of my pley axeth it.

WHETHER thou nat how Cresus, the king of Lydiens, of whiche litel biforn, that this rewliche Cresus was caught of Cyrus and lad to the fyr to ben brent, but that a rayn descended doun fro hevene that rescowede him? And is it out of thy minde how that Paulus, consul of Rome, when he hadde taken the king of Perciens, weep pitously for the captivitee of the self kinge? What other thing bewailen the cryinges of tragedies but only the dedes of fortune, that with an unwarlike stroke overtorneth realmes of grete nobley? **Gloss.** Tragedie is to seyn, a ditec of a prosperitee for a tyme, that endeth in wrecchednesse.

WHETHER nat thou in Grete, when thou were yonge, that in the entree, or in the celere, of Jupiter, ther ben couched two tonnes; that on is ful of good, that other is ful of harm? What right hast thou to pleyne, yif thou hast taken more plenteuously of the good syde, that is to seyn, of my riches and prosperites; and what eek if I ne be nat al departed fro thee? What eek yif my mutabilitee yiveth thee rightful cause of hope to han yit beter thinges? Natheles dismyne thee nat in thy thought; and thou that art put in the comune realme of alle, ne desyre nat to liven by thyn only propre right.

Metre II.

Si quantas rapidis flatibus incitus.

WHETHER plente, that is gooddesse of riches, hielded adoun with ful horn, and with draweth nat hir hand, as many riches as the see cometh upward sandes when it is moeved with ravissching blastes, or elles as many riches as ther shynen brighte sterres on hevenc on the sterry nightes; yif, for al that, mankinde nolde not cese to wepe wrecchede pleyntes. And al be it so that God receyveth gladly hir preyers, and yiveth them (as fool large) moche gold, & aparaileth covetous men with noble or clere honours: yit semeth hem haven ygeten nothing, but alwey hir cruel ravynne, devouringe al that they han geten, sheweth other gapinges; that is to seyn, gapen and desyren yit after mo riches. What byddes mighten withholden, to any certin ende, the desordene covetise of men, when ever the rather that it fleteth in large yiftes, the more ay brenneth in hem the thirst of

havinge? Certes he that, quakinge & dredful, weneth himselven nedy, he ne liveth nevermore riche.

Prose III.

Hic igitur si pro se tecum fortuna loqueretur.

WHETHER, yif that fortune spake with thee for hirself in this manere, forsothe thou ne haddest nat what thou mightest answer. And, if thou hast anything wherwith thou mayest rightfully defenden thy complaint, it behoveth thee to shewen it; & I wol yeven thee space to tellen it.

WHETHER, quod I thanne, thise beeth faire thinges, & enointed with hony sweetnesse of rethorike and musike; and only whyl they ben herd they ben delicious. But to wrecches is a depere felinge of harm; this is to seyn, that wrecches felen the harmes that they suffer from more greuously than the remedies or the delites of thise wordes mowen gladen or comforten hem; so that, when thise thinges stinten for to sounen in eres, the sorwe that is inset greveth the thought.

WHETHER so is it, quod she. For thise ne ben yit none remedies of thy maladye; but they ben a maner norisschinges of thy sorwe, yit rebel ayen thy curacioun. For when that tyme is, I shal moeve swiche thinges that percen hemself depe. But natheles, that thou shalt not wilne to leten thyself a wrecche, hast thou foryeten the noumber and the manere of thy wefulness? I holde me stille, how that the goverayne men of the citee token thee in cure and kepinge, when thou were orphelin of fader and moder, and were chosen in affinitee of princes of the citee; and thou begunne rather to be leef and dere than for to ben a neighbour; the whiche thing is the most precious kinde of any propinquitee or alyvaunce that may ben. Who is it that ne seidetho that thou were right weleful, with so grete a nobleye of thy fadres in lawe, and with the chastitee of thy wyf, and with the oportunitie and noblesse of thy masculin children, that is to seyn, thy sones? And over al this, me list to passen the comune thinges, how thou haddest in thy youth dignitees that weren werned to olde men. But it delyteth me to comen now to the singular uphepinge of thy wefulness. Yif any fruit of mortal thinges may han any weighte or prys of wefulness, mightest thou ever foryeten, for any charge

of harm that mighte bifalle, the remembrance of thilke day that thou saye thy two sones maked conseileres, and ylad to gedere fro thyn house under so greet assemblee of senatores & under the blythenesse of poeple; and when thou saye hem set in the court in here chayeres of dignitees? Thou, rethorien or pronouncere of kinges preysinges, deservedest glorie of wit and of eloquence, when thou, sittinge bitwene thy two sones, conseileres, in the place that highte Circo, fulfuldest the abydinge of the multitude of poeple that was sprad abouten thee, with so large preysinge & laude, as men singen in victories. Tho yave thou wordes to fortune, as I trowe, that is to seyn, tho festedest thou fortune with glosinge wordes & deceivedest hir, when she acowede thee and norisshe thee as hir owne delyces. Thou bere away of fortune a yifte, that is to seyn, swiche guerdoun, that she never yaf to privee man. Wilt thou therfor leye a rekeninge with fortune? She hath now twinkled first upon thee with a wikkede eye. Yif thou considere the noumber and the manere of thy blisses and of thy sorwes, thou mayst nat forsaken that thou art yit blisful. For if thou therfor wenest thyself nat weleful, for thinges that tho semeden joyful ben passed, ther nis nat why thou sholdest wene thyself a wrecche; for thinges that semen now sorye passen also.

WHETHER thou now comen first, a sodein gest, into the shadwe or tabernacle of this lyf; or trowest thou that any stedefastnesse be in mannes thinges, when ofte a swift houre dissolveth the same man; that is to seyn, when the soule departeth fro the body? For, although that selde is ther any feith that fortunous thinges wolen dwellen, yit natheles the laste day of amannes lyf is a manere deeth to fortune, and also to thilke that hath dwelt. And therfor, what, wenestow, thar thee recche, yif thou forlete hir in deyninge, or elles that she, fortune, forlete thee in flecinge away?

Metre III.

Cum polo Phebus roseis quadrigis.

WHETHER Phebus, the sonne, binginneth to spreden his cleer nesse with rosene chariettes, thanne the sterre, ydimmed, paleth hir whyte cheres, by the flambes of the sonne that overcometh the sterrelight. This is to seyn, when the sonne is risen, the deysterre wexeth pale, and leaeth hir light for the grete brightnesse of the sonne.